



The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity, 30th August 2020

Dear Friends,

The lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic was imposed very quickly. Almost in an instant, our lives were changed. We were prevented from carrying out many of our normal activities. For churchgoers it meant that we were no longer able to attend church, as places of worship were closed. It was understandable if we wondered when, or even if, it would be possible to attend services in church again.

This weekend the first part of the answer to that question in this Benefice will be answered. As you know, St. Mary's opens for public worship today with a service of Holy Eucharist. You will also have read of the procedures which will be necessary to ensure a safe environment in which we can worship.

One of the requirements is a limit on the number of people allowed to be present if we are to maintain satisfactory social distancing. All places for today's service have been taken. I am understandably pleased at this and know that it will be a joyous occasion when we meet and worship together. However, I am also aware that there may have been those who were unable to obtain a place, and that there will be those who are unable to attend for other reasons. Please be assured that our thoughts and prayers are with you. The service will be recorded and will be available on the Facebook site later in the day.

As I mentioned above, this is the first part of the answer in this Benefice. We also have the good news that Holy Trinity, Christchurch and St. Peter's are likely to re-open for worship during September. These re-openings will be equally joyous occasions. Much work has been and is being done in this respect and our thanks are due to those who have made and will be making the re-opening of our churches possible.

This week, our schools restart. You will know that they were closed, except for the children of essential workers, for most of the lockdown period. Those who are parents or grandparents will have seen how the children have missed the routine of school and seeing their friends and teachers. Education is so important for the development of our children, both intellectually and socially, and ultimately for the economy and structure of our society.

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It will be understandable if there is some anxiety as schools restart. Let us hold in our prayers at this time all parents, teachers, all other school staff, and children, that any fears or anxieties are allayed and that all goes smoothly as schools adopt the changes that will have been necessary as a result of the pandemic.

As you will have read elsewhere, on Thursday this week, September 3rd, Fr. Tom will be licensed by the Bishop of Wakefield as Associate Priest of Grimethorpe with Bierley, Ryhill and South Kirby in the Diocese of Leeds. Please pray for him as he takes this next step in his ministry journey, and for him and Paul as they settle into their new home and into South Yorkshire.

With every good wish

Jeff